

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

MERIT INCREASES AND PROMOTIONS REVISITED

"As designed, the present merit salary increase policy has the advantage of attempting to recognize differential levels of work performance.

"As administered, however, increases are perceived by employees either as automatic, i.e., making no differentiation among levels of merit, or as unfair. Inequities enter in a variety of ways, primarily because of lack of uniform standards among campuses, departments, and supervisors and as applied among employees. The necessity to balance increases at 4.9%, often by reducing one employee's increase to give another 7-1/2%, is also perceived as unfair.

"Given the difficulties of truly relating increases to meritorious work performance, and given that all merit increases must balance out at 4.9%, the [University Staff Personnel] Board recommends that the University forgo any pretense of having a merit plan and instead use an anniversary plan similar to the State's wherein an employee rendering continuing satisfactory performance would receive a 5% increase; an employee whose work performance was unsatisfactory would receive no increase. (Emphasis added)

-- University Staff Personnel Board Newsletter,
76:3 (August 12, 1976) p.5

When an appointed University-wide personnel board calls upon the University of California to "forgo any pretense of having a merit plan" because of inequities and financial balancing considerations, that is "man bites dog" news. Even if limited to non-academic employees, it is a tremendous admission of what U.C. employees, including librarians, have been saying for some time -- that merit steps and promotions are often arbitrary, discriminatory, and capricious.

LIBRARIANS 1976/77 REVIEW

The University Librarian's 12 October 1976 guidelines to U.C. Berkeley Department Heads for *Merit Increase, Promotion and Career Status Review of Academic Staff* (librarians) for the 1976/77 review, establish further barriers

against merit increases. For the first time in merit increases for all librarians, Department Heads must "provide a comprehensive assessment of the candidate's qualifications, duties and responsibilities and performance and achievements with reference to the criteria described in Section 51-4 of the Academic Personnel Manual." These criteria are:

- a. Professional competence and quality of service within the library.
- b. Professional activity outside the library.
- c. University and public service.
- d. Research and other creative activity."

Such a "comprehensive assessment" has been a distinctive requirement of the promotion process, which has become more onerous in the last few years. To seriously add a "comprehensive assessment" of a librarian's career for every annual, biennial or triennial merit step review is to create a paper mountain and a serious interference with the normal work of the library.

At the May 4, 1976 semi-annual Librarians Association University of California (LAUC) Assembly meeting at Berkeley, it was the unanimous vote of U.C. librarians to simplify the merit review procedures. Librarians are fed up with the demeaning need to heap up paper ("documentation") praising themselves, in order to have a chance to get a merit increase. Instead, librarians recommended that supervisors and department heads give a simple recommendation for merit increases based upon continued satisfactory work, as had been normal practice in the past.

The University Librarian seemed to accept this as the spirit of the meeting, while claiming to be bound by general University regulations. Now, we have these new onerous requirements. Why?

WHY NEW REQUIREMENTS?

This change is not an isolated act separate from other University policies. U.C. librarians are following faculty in facing new criteria for obtaining merit increases. New reasons are being advanced to discount the achievements of faculty and deny them normal merit steps, one device being to downgrade the worth of their publications.

Berkeley, the most heavily bureaucratized campus, lives under the shadow of University Hall, with a powerful statewide administrators' and regents' presence. As one Dean put it: even a fire engine must be cleared by University Hall before it enters the campus to put out a fire.

The increasing pressure against merit increases is new, but the Berkeley library has always been a trail blazer in limiting promotions for librarians. We have lagged behind other campuses, especially UCLA, for years. There are always "reasons", but there is always a definite direction -- backward. On the other hand, when it comes to producing paper work, Berkeley is always ahead. We lead in two directions -- coming and going.

If one records the reasons offered to librarians for denying them promotions, especially, there is a clear pattern: (1) Whatever you have been doing, it is not enough; (2) Whatever you haven't done is the important requirement; (3) Not everybody agreed that you warranted a promotion, and with divided opinions -- kept hidden from the candidate -- a negative decision was made by higher authority (until recently the Assistant Chancellor).

CONTRADICTIONARY REQUIREMENTS

It is grimly amusing to hear one librarian told that the lack of publishing led to the denial of a promotion, while another librarian is told that considerable publishing was not important, and that something else must be done. It is a *Catch 22* situation.

While nobody will come out and say it, it is clear to us that the purpose for denying merit increases and promotions is obviously to save money. The loss when a merit increase is denied is not a one year loss but cumulates. For example, if you are Associate Librarian, Step II, and were denied a merit increase on July 1, 1976, and assuming a 5 percent general salary increase a year for the next 10 years with no further denial of merit increases or promotions, then you will have lost \$9832 over the 10 year span!

The Administration is taking advantage of librarians' concern for professional merit, by tying merit to salary. What is insulting and demeaning about the whole process is that librarians, or other academic employees, are being denied advancement and recognition for reasons other than the quality of their job performance.

It is a terrible wound to one's professional pride and self esteem to be told: "You're not good enough to be promoted," when the real reason is financial. In addition, loss of a merit step or a promotion is effectively a pay cut, when balanced against constant inflation and inadequate annual salary range adjustments.

It would be less destructive if the University and its administrators came right out and said: "There is only so much money. We can afford to promote only so many at a time. In most cases it's not your fault that you haven't been promoted or received a merit increase. We don't want to add self-doubts to your financial injury. We're going to have to establish a clear line of those meriting promotion or merit steps, but who have to wait for the money. We want your help in deciding how to handle the situation in the fairest manner, and we will do it out in the open."

LET THE UNION HELP YOU

The University Council - American Federation of Teachers offers its services to U.C. librarians who feel that they have been discriminated against or unfairly dealt with in the review process. We will look into your case and, where indicated, attempt to assist in appeals. We invite all U.C. librarians to join the union and help get back some dignity for U.C. librarians. It will not be easy, but together we can make changes.

Attached is a dues check-off form and membership application. Please fill it in, mail it to the union, and join the union. The more members we have, the greater our chances for success.

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BERKELEY-SAN FRANCISCO LIBRARIANS ELECT NEW OFFICERS

The recent mail ballot election resulted in the following being elected as officers of the University Federation of Librarians, Local 1795 (Berkeley and San Francisco campuses)

President: Alison Howard (Optometry Library)

Vice President: Anne Lipow (Cooperative Services)

Secretary-Treasurer: Bill Whitson (Moffitt Undergraduate Library)

Executive Committee: Mary Blackburn (Catalog Dept.), Phil Hoehn (Bancroft), Jean Hudson (General Reference Service), Ken Logan (S/SE Asia Library Service), and Clara Stern (Inst. of Industrial Relations)

Delegates to the Central Labor Council of Alameda County, AFL-CIO: Laurel Burley (Central Labor Council), and Charles Shain (Environmental Design Library)

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